

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY - FIRST LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2002**

**ON SCR 42, 2001 REGULAR SESSION, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO EXAMINE THE PROBLEM OF
CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND TO RECOMMEND STRATEGIES, INCLUDING THE
CREATION OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL PHYSICAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM, TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM**

**PREPARED BY:
STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
NOVEMBER 2001**

The Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Education (DOE) recognize the severity of the childhood obesity epidemic plaguing the country. One of the goals of the Healthy Hawai'i Initiative (HHI) is to decrease the prevalence of obesity, and our efforts go beyond traditional school interventions. Environmental, systems and policy changes that promote physical activity, good nutrition and tobacco prevention and control is central to the HHI, and our strategy to address the obesity issue is multi-faceted, with one of the main components being coordinated school health. Other efforts include funding 41 communities to develop plans that promote healthier communities focusing on nutrition, physical activity (PA) and tobacco prevention and control; DOH support for nutrition and physical activity coalitions; and funding for innovative targeted nutrition and physical activity promotion projects through the Request for Proposal process.

DOH provided DOE with 1.85 million dollars to support Coordinated School Health Programs (CSHP) focusing on health education and physical education, and the implementation of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards for health and physical education.

The CSHP goals are to: 1) Increase the amount of physical activity among school-aged youth; 2) Decrease the prevalence of smoking among school-aged youth including the elementary school level; 3) Increase the number of school-aged children consuming the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, and 4) Reduce obesity among school-aged children. Sixteen schools are currently funded to address these goals, and they are implementing their action plans.

Some of the newly developed programs being implemented in the CSHP include:

- Before and after school, and lunchtime activities promoting physical activity
- Partnerships formed with organizations (PA and fitness organizations) to increase PA, i.e. American Heart Association – Jump Rope for Heart.
- Teachers and staff serving as role models by participating in on campus walking groups, aerobics, etc.
- Water and 100% juices were offered as alternatives to soda in vending machines
- Fruit served as snacks
- Healthy recipe contest

DOH funding also supported the hiring of health and physical education state resource teachers and district resource teachers to support the implementation of the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards for Health and Physical Education. Ten positions were created to provide infrastructure to support the implementation process. The funds are helping to provide professional development opportunities and site-specific outreach support to the 6,000 plus K-12 teachers of health and physical education in the field.

Funding from HHI also supports a curriculum development and review component that is designed to ease teachers' transition to a more standards-based curriculum. The process will help identify instructional material to be recommended to the field. HHI funds are allowing each district to provide a resource center of this material to be available to teachers. Teachers will be allowed to review the materials at their leisure and apply for possible training in future years.

Efforts are also underway to work in collaboration with DOE to improve both the quality and quantity of elementary school physical education. Current policy recommends 120 minutes of physical education and 115 minutes of health education per week in elementary schools and one semester of health in middle and high school; and one year of physical education in middle and high school. Approximately 80% of Physical Education, and 100% of Health Education is being presented by generalists at the Elementary school level. Advocates would like to see policies developed to protect the middle and high school requirements while supporting the placement of a certified physical education teacher at every elementary school.

HHI is also supporting a pilot study in a Windward District elementary school, in which a DOH-developed nutrition education curriculum and a nationally acclaimed physical activity curriculum (CATCH) are being implemented. The objective of this project is to examine the short-term effect of a nutrition/physical activity curriculum on school children's food and PA behaviors. The results of this pilot study will be utilized to determine effective strategies for obesity prevention programs within DOE.

The Department of Health also strives to disseminate new data and research related to obesity and other health issues. This recently has included the development and dissemination of a document entitled "The Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Statewide Highlights". In addition, the Department is currently working to implement the Nutrition Education Needs Assessment Survey (NENAS) in public schools to gather baseline data related to physical activity, nutritional practices and obesity. This survey will include a physical assessment component that will allow for the calculation of body mass indexes (BMI) for a subsample of the survey population. The data will then be utilized to apply for national funding for obesity prevention type programs and research which can be housed within DOE or which would directly benefit DOE.

Efforts are also underway to coordinate the many PA and nutrition coalitions that exist in our state. Many of these coalitions operate independently and coordination is desired to ensure duplication of service does not occur. This effort is ongoing and includes important health agency partners such as the University of Hawai'i, American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association.

Through a purchase of service with Kapi`olani Medical Center, the Department is developing a pediatric BMI measuring device designed to make it easy for health professionals to routinely measure pediatric BMIs. These measuring devices will then be implemented as part of a standard of practice at Kapi`olani Medical Center with hopes of expansion to other health care agencies and the DOE. Tracking BMI is essential for identifying childhood obesity early on, and for early intervention in the disease process.

A large-scale media campaign targeting local families will be initiated in January 2002. This media campaign will feature tobacco prevention, proper nutrition and physical activity promotion messages emphasizing national health messages such as "You have to start somewhere". As part of the media campaign efforts will be undertaken to coordinate community programs and promotional campaigns.

Through the HHI, DOH is implementing a multi-faceted strategy to address obesity and childhood obesity. Many partnerships have been formed to confront this costly disease, and we are committed to further interventions, and to collect relevant data to track our progress.

Recommended strategies to further address childhood obesity are:

- Improving the quality and quantity of PE in the elementary school with particular emphasis on ensuring that each youth receives the recommended amount of PE appropriate for their grade level
- Coordination of web based PE, PA and nutrition information so it is accessible for classroom and resource teachers
- Pilot testing of national PE curricula to ensure suitability and cultural sensitivity
- Voluntary adoption of environmental changes in the school supportive of physical activity, and good nutrition, i.e. the creation and promotion of walking paths and healthy choices in vending machines
- Coordination of the use of public resources statewide, i.e. between Parks and Recreation and DOE
- Adoption and implementation of the Hawai'i DOE Health and PE Standards
- Adoption of school complex levels policies that are supportive of healthy eating and regular physical activity

The above strategies, occurring through private and public interagency partnerships, are recommended to ensure the prevention of obesity in Hawai'i is systematic and comprehensive.